

OPENERS

The Space Between

by Beth DeFrancis Sun

I recently found myself wondering what *Virginia Libraries* is *really* all about (once you make it past the marbled covers). Clearly the journal focuses on libraries, and its geographical center is the Commonwealth of Virginia. So it makes sense that the articles explore various aspects of libraries and librarianship as they relate to the public, special, school, research, and academic libraries within the boundaries of the Old Dominion. Sometimes referred to as “The Mother of Presidents,” our state lays claim to some of the country’s most important history—from the Jamestown settlement, to the Battle of Bull Run, to the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom—and this heritage is handsomely represented in our libraries.

But the central focus of the *Virginia Libraries* journal extends beyond the books, multimedia, and related materials that reside on our libraries’ shelves (whether physical or virtual). It’s more than the collections—regardless of their historical importance or the beautiful “homes” in which they reside, whether that’s Monticello, the Ginter Botanical Garden, the Library of Virginia, or the South County Library in Roanoke.

Ultimately, *Virginia Libraries* isn’t about the books on the shelves, the significance of their

content, nor the physical facilities in which these creative works are stored. Rather, *it’s about the distance that lies in between these library materials and Virginia’s library patrons*, and the many ways in which members of the Virginia Library Association (VLA)—and the readers of this journal—can help close that gap. (Tempting as

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it is to attach a keyword here, it’s more about an evolving process than a thing, and the experience is unique for all VLA members).

Whether you decide to represent next year’s Virginia delegation during Library Legislative Day in Washington D.C (see page 5); determine that you’d like to become a library mentor at Virginia Tech (see page 10), or aspire to participate in the American Library Association (ALA) Emerging Leaders Program (see page 7), ultimately we’re all working together to close up the space between the accumulated

body of knowledge contained in our libraries and the folks who call Virginia “home.”

How can *you* help narrow the distance between the states’ library materials and Virginia’s multi-ethnic and multi-generational readers? An innovative new program might draw teens closer to your library’s YA collections; reading to school children might spark an interest in a future occupation; or a computer class might help seniors learn to peruse a digital collection or download a book to a borrowed e-reader.

For additional ideas and inspiration, please consider attending the 2012 VLA conference to be held October 24–26 in Williamsburg. You’ll meet plenty of fellow book lovers and learn more about the many ways you can support Virginia’s libraries. You might also consider writing a book review for the *Virginia Libraries* journal. (See page 29 for a list of candidates for possible review, as well as the submission guidelines on page 4). Pick a book by a Virginia author or about a Virginia topic, and tell us about it! Help narrow the gap between the covers that contain a piece of Virginia’s heritage... and a pair of hands to hold it, hang on its every word, and perhaps even fall in love with the library. **VI**